



State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
**Tennessee State Library and Archives**  
403 Seventh Avenue North  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**GOVERNOR WILLIE BLOUNT  
PAPERS  
1809-1815  
(GP 5)**

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## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The correspondence in the files of Governor Willie (pronounced Wylie) Blount reflects the confusion, uncertainty and frustration resulting from the passage of a number of laws governing entrance into and separation from the military service. This situation seems to have germinated in a small way during the Creek War, in which the existing laws seem to have conspired together to foster absenteeism.

For the rest, the correspondence is of a routine or non-descript character. Also, included within the file is correspondence reflecting Blount's long career as a public official; first as secretary to his half-brother (William Blount) when the latter was a territorial governor; later as a public official whose experience in government made him valuable for a number of exacting jobs of a highly specialized nature. Also included is a group of letters written seven years after his incumbency as Governor, to one William Hillsman on matters of religious doctrine.

Of additional note is a letter from the President of the State Bank, advising of the suspension of specie payments by the Bank- attributable to return to power of Napoleon Bonaparte and the Governor's message pursuant thereto, dated 26 July 1815.

Much of the correspondence contained in the papers of Willie Blount are of the "type-script" variety; the original documents have not been located.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

- 1768 Born April 18. He was the son of Jacob and Hannah Baker Blount, making him a half-brother to William Blount.
- 1790 Served as private secretary to William Blount, then serving as Tennessee's Territorial Governor.
- ca. 1802 Moved from Knoxville to Montgomery County and married Lucinda Baker.
- 1809 After one term in the State Legislature, he was elected Governor of Tennessee, defeating William Cocke by about 3,000 votes. He was re-elected in 1811 and 1813.
- 1827 Defeated in another bid for the governorship following many years as a successful planter.
- 1834 Member of the State Constitutional Convention, representing Montgomery County.
- 1835 Died September 10. Buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Clarksville, Tennessee.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Willie (pronounced Wylie) Blount was born in Bertie County, North Carolina, about 1767, the exact year being in doubt. Very little is known of his youth, but as a young man of about twenty-one or twenty-two years he arrived in the Tennessee country to become the private secretary of his older half-brother, William Blount, who had been appointed Territorial Governor of the newly-created Federal Territory out of which the State of Tennessee was erected in 1796. The youthful secretary was immediately initiated into the mysteries of state-craft, having personal and official contact with the leaders in the new country. Though on the outskirts of civilization, he was associated with a number of public men who exerted powerful and lasting influence in public affairs that assumed even national scope in some respects. Among those stalwarts were such men as Andrew Jackson, John Sevier, James White, Samuel Carrick, Samuel Doak, Archibald Roane, and a sizable company of others of distinct renown. What a knightly company! There were soldiers, statesmen, orators, educators, and ministers of no small degree.

In April, 1796, Willie Blount was elected by the Legislature as one of the Judges of the Superior Courts of Law and Equity. Apparently the judicial toga did not suit him, for most legal historians record that he resigned the same year of his election and that court records do not disclose any opinion as having been delivered by him as Judge. One authority states that he even declined accepting the office.

In 1809, he was elected Governor for the first of three successive terms. The gubernatorial service for which he is most signally remembered was the timely and invaluable aid he rendered to General Andrew Jackson in the campaigns against the Creek Indians. When news of the massacre at Fort Mims, in 1813, reached Governor Blount, he did not await or request Federal aid; he appealed to the Legislature of Tennessee and was authorized to make a call for thirty-five hundred volunteers who were to be maintained by an appropriation of \$300,000. For the signal services rendered by Governor Blount in the conflict, he received expressions of gratitude from President James Madison, three Secretaries of War, and a commendatory resolution by the Tennessee Legislature. The latter action was the judgment rendered by his own people who regarded him as an able, firm, and alert public servant.

Nor was Governor Blount of a doubtful or hesitant frame of mind when war was declared against England in June, 1812. He immediately tendered to President Madison twenty-five hundred volunteers under the command of General Andrew Jackson. To arm and equip those troops for effective service was no easy task. At the time, there were no ordnance supplies in Tennessee, no quarter-master stores, no money. On his own responsibility, Governor Blount raised a war-chest of some \$15,000 to meet pressing needs of the little army. There was neither pomp nor pageantry in reviewing the raw recruits. The men were, for the most part, armed with rifles of different caliber, with accoutrements fashioned according to individual fancy or necessity, and dressed in homemade clothes. Two years later, these and other troops at the battle of New Orleans met and defeated veteran British troops who had received practical training in the art of

war under the great Duke of Wellington. A brief extract from Governor Blount's exhortation to the Tennessee troops upon their departure to the deep South would dignify the official status of the Chief Executive of any State:

"The degree of satisfaction felt by the Executive of the State at the promptitude of the militia in response to the call of arms, ready to act, commands an expression of his grateful sense of their patriotism and zeal. To be useful to our country should be the motto of each man; go forth, meet and vanquish the enemy and, at the end of your term of service, return crowned with laurels, to receive the plaudits of your countrymen."

After Governor Blount's retirement from the governorship in 1815, he resumed his farming interests in Montgomery County where he had resided since about the turn of the century. In 1827, he was again a candidate for Governor but was badly defeated by Sam Houston. Seven years later, he represented Montgomery County in the Constitutional Convention. A year later, 1835, he died at his home near Clarksville. From an appropriation of funds by the Legislature, a monument was erected in his honor in 1878 at the unveiling of which Governor James D. Porter closed his address with the following statement:

"Let the monument be unveiled, and stand here protected by you and your descendants, and be the witness to all ages to come of our reverence for the character of a great and good man."

## CONTAINER LIST

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Folder No.</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
1	1	Correspondence	1803
	2	Correspondence	1811-1815
	3	Correspondence: Blount to John Hillsman	1822
	4	Correspondence: Incoming	1812-1815
	5	Correspondence: Anthony Porter (Georgia) to Blount	April 19, 1813
	6	Correspondence: Daniel Rodney (Delaware); Hugh Lawson White (Tennessee)	1815
	7	Commissions	
	8	Warrants for payment	1810
	9	Warrant book of Govs. Blount and McMinn	1811-1818

(Oversized Governors' Material, Box 1)

Commissions: Justice of the Peace, Sumner County, Tennessee	1809, 1811-13
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